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**PRE-BOOT MULTICAST ADDRESS  
MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL FOR  
A COMPUTER NETWORK**

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**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A pre-boot multicast address management protocol for a computer network. This novel protocol includes an address conflict-clearing process that ensures that the same multicast address is not given to separate clients desiring different boot information.

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This address conflict-clearing technique alleviates any addressing conflicts and address duplication problems and enables multiple boot negotiation server processes to be present on the same network. The novel protocol of the present invention also provides a means for a boot negotiation server process and a multicast file server process to communicate in a bi-directional manner. Thus, the boot negotiation server process and the multicast file server process can communicate by sending messages and responses back and forth between each other. This communication feature allows the boot negotiation server process and the multicast file server process to reside on separate computers within the network.

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